

# SUZUKI PIANO BASICS FOUNDATION NEWS

Volume 3.3, May/June 1998

To facilitate, promote, and educate the public on the way of teaching and playing the piano taught at the Talent Education Research Institute in Matsumoto, Japan by Dr. Haruko Kataoka.

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## PIANO TONE: MUSICAL TONE, PART 2

by Dr. Haruko Kataoka

On this earth, whenever an object hits against another object, sound is produced. If the objects are hard, the sound is loud and unpleasant. We cannot call this type of sound a musical sound. People do not like it. In other words, it is a disagreeable noise that does not have a good effect on people. It is noise because when a hard object hits another hard object, there is no way that the shock of the hit is released. Only a crashing sound remains, a sound that is devoid of resonating harmonics.

All musical instruments apply the principle that when an object strikes another, sound is produced. As I said above, however, a mere crash is unpleasant, and instruments have been devised not to produce disagreeable sounds. When something hits something else and the shock of the hit is nicely absorbed, musical tone is produced. The tone resonates with harmonics and gives people a comfortable feeling.

Let us consider percussion instruments. For example, drum heads are made of leather and thus have elasticity when struck with hard sticks. This is true both in Japan and in the West. Xylophones are played by a person who has been trained to hold the sticks softly so that the shock of playing the instrument is absorbed by the body. String instruments, too, absorb shock with the elasticity of the strings and the bow. The same is true for other instruments.

The question is, how do we deal with this shock when it comes to the piano? Piano keys can be depressed to a depth of about 1.2 cm. The moving of the key absorbs some of the shock. (The piano action is very intricately designed to be able to do this work.) The pianist absorbs shock using the elasticity of his or her entire body, and the fingers which actually touch the keys play an important role in this process. God created human hands to move in a very useful way. Hands are divided into two parts: the fingers and the palm.

We have four joints, counting the wrist joint. By using these, we can have soft, good fingers with which to avoid the shock of coming into contact with the piano keys. Thus we may produce a musical tone which resonates harmonically.

The piano has eighty-eight keys. Whenever we play any key, we must be sure to move the fingers softly and carefully. We must not hit, poke or strike. (This goes for playing chords as well as for single notes.) We must concentrate on each note and always use the fingers carefully. We must acquire a strong habit in our hands and bodies. Ability does not develop without repetition.

We must listen to our own tone carefully and always seek to produce the best, musical tone for our hands and bodies to naturally improve. We can well understand the natural use of the body if we watch a baby sit down at the piano. Babies always move naturally and effortlessly in the way I am describing.

Tone is the basic element of music. If we do not completely learn how to produce tone in our childhood, we become people who are uninterested in tone, and then we can allow ourselves to play piano with a terrible and noisy sound. People who play like this gradually begin to dislike playing the piano. But if we play carefully with soft fingers, making a resonant sound and avoiding a crashing noise, we can give our whole minds to the tone we are playing.

Because of the simple fact that a piano can produce sound very easily, it is possible for us, with a small shift of emphasis, to let children become poor pianists who cannot play musically.

Students, when you begin to study piano, you take a lesson in tone from your teacher each week. (Don't worry if you hear the same things repeated over and over!) Please become a person who can, after ten years, make the kind of musical tone to which you can give your whole mind and soul. If you acquire this ability, you can play pieces freely and enjoyably, and the people who hear you will be happy.

Reprinted from the **Matsumoto Newsletter**, Vol.1, no.10, March, 1992

This and other articles by Dr. Kataoka are translated by Mitsuo Furumachi and edited by Dr. Karen Hagberg.

Web edited by Kenneth Wilburn

Illustrations by Julie Kataoka

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## HOW GOLF AND PIANO MIX

by **JEFFREY EDELMAN**

Every time I go to my piano lesson, there is something we discuss; something in common with golf and piano. For instance, one day I came to my piano lesson and I was pulling my arms in. My teacher showed me how to hold my arms in a better position. I told her I have the same problem in golf. So that's how we got the idea of writing this article.

The most important thing is practice and how you practice. Repetition when you are practicing a golf shot means you practice slowly. This is the same thing in piano if you want to have good technique and tone.

If you really want to swing the golf club well and play the piano well, you have to be relaxed. If you're stiff, you'll hook the ball. If you're stiff when you play the piano, you'll make a banging sound.

Posture is important too. If you have good posture, you'll strike the key right or hit the ball on the "sweet spot". If you have bad posture or move your head too much, you won't strike the key or hit the ball right. So golf and piano mix. Playing golf helps my piano and playing piano helps my golf.

*Jeffrey Edelman is nine years old and lives in South Lake, Texas. He studies piano with Cathy Williams-Hargrave and is an avid golfer.*

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## HOW TO TEACH BEGINNERS: NO. 25

### THE WILD RIDER - SCHUMANN

BY DR. HARUKO KATAOKA

This is an excellent piece of music, so it is very accessible and can be learned quickly. However, the piece is in 6/8 time, and, since most of the notes are staccato, it is a difficult piece to play very well. That is to say, this piece is very, very useful to improve piano technique.

To begin with, while listening a great deal to the recording, thoroughly learn the hands alone, and then combine the hands. At this point, you may begin to study how to play well.

First, the right hand.

Since the piece is in 6/8 time, each measure is comprised of two triplets. This is called compound duple time. Triple time can be represented by a right triangle with 1 being the vertical side, 2 being the horizontal base, and 3 representing the hypotenuse.

We use the first three notes in measure 1 to practice this right triangle correctly. The first note (A with the 2nd finger) is played down, with a heavy tone after getting ready from above. The next note (E with the thumb) is played in a light, small tone, moving the tip of the thumb just a bit without changing the hand position with which we ended the first note. The third note (A with the 2nd finger again) is up, and we play it with a light, bright tone. Now the right triangle is completed. Repeat this practice slowly and carefully 20-30 times a day.

Teach this in detail at each lesson. When we are able to play it quite well, practice measures 1-4 in the right hand slowly and carefully, playing the triple time in each triplet correctly in this way.

When playing staccato, do not hit the keyboard with stiff fingers, but produce a musical, staccato tone, always with good posture and in good balance, keeping the body and hands soft in order to absorb the shock of hitting the fingers against the keys.

Since children are not greedy, they do not try to improve all by themselves. Teachers and parents always must pay attention to them.

We slowly and carefully repeat F-C-F (2-5-2) in the left hand, measure 9, the same as we have done in the right hand, practicing triple time as represented by the right triangle.

Left-handed players can do this easily, but right-handers must do considerable practice here, taking much more time than in the right hand. Slow practice must be done in order to be able to play triple time, represented by the right triangle, correctly.

The first beat is played down. Since we exhale forcefully and have a heavy feeling on the first beat, the second beat is played very lightly and softly. The third beat is up, and the quality of tone is light, so inhale at this point. Check up on the student at each lesson to see if he or she has practiced this. If the student has not learned it yet, repeat the same thing carefully and kindly.

When the student can play the right triangle well, slowly practice the melody in measures 9-12 and 13-16 in accordance with the right triangle he or she has practiced in measure 9.

Next, measures 1-8 in the left hand. Since the piece is in compound duple time, there are two beats in a measure. Always the first beat is down and the second beat is up. There are eighth-note chords, which are played staccato. This is the accompaniment, and the piece is fast. Therefore, we first touch the keyboard with the fingertips. When we play, we move the fingertips slightly, making down and up staccato with a small motion.

Because the chords on the first beats in measures 2 & 3 are quarter notes, not staccato, we sing them out with a long downstroke. The following two eighth notes are played very light and short.

Tell students to memorize the following measures by themselves: Left hand measures 2, 3, 4, 8, 12 and right hand measure 12. [Number these one through six and require students to be able to play them at random, in any order.] If the students can do this, they can practice the difficult places many times, and will improve before they know it. Memorize the fingering correctly and thoroughly at the beginning too.

After having prepared with the practice routines above, we put hands together. Sforzando is a strong accent. We express the feeling of the Wild Rider with the use of these sforzandi. It is important to note that, throughout the piece, sforzandi are marked only in the melody, not in the accompaniment.

For example, in measures 1-8 they are found only in the right hand, so be sure not to apply them to the left-hand chords. On the other hand, in measures 16-24, the sforzandi are in the left hand, not in the right-hand chords. This middle section, however, is marked forte, so let us play the right-hand chords rather loudly to further convey the strong spirit of the Wild Rider. [Just do not confuse this louder-than-usual accompaniment with the sforzando, which is only in the melody.] Because measures 1 - 4 constitute one phrase, play the fourth measure light and small (measure 8 is the same).

Practice the above thoroughly, over and over again, keeping the correct posture, holding the arms firmly, relaxing the shoulder, the palm and the fingers, (not holding the wrist with force), making the body natural, moving the fingertips from above the keys, producing good sound.

Even when a student polishes this piece for the first time, this is just a first step. If we teach patiently at each lesson, the technique will advance to a second and then a third stage.

I teach this piece for at least six months to every student at each lesson. Of course, the students also move on to the next pieces, but being able to play this piece well is of great advantage for the student's technique.

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## **A MIXTURE OF SADNESS AND HAPPINESS**

**BY BRUCE ANDERSON  
ST. PETERSBURG BEACH, FLORIDA**

I have just returned from my ninth visit to Matsumoto. I had not planned to go to Japan this winter, but, upon hearing of Dr. Suzuki's death, I felt immediately that I wanted to attend the Memorial Service and be with my Japanese Suzuki Method friends at this important time. It was truly an emotional experience of sadness and happiness at the same time.

I was very sad to feel the loss of Suzuki Sensei's physical presence and the loneliness as I visited with Mrs. Suzuki at her home. But at the same time I experienced great happiness to meet my fellow teachers, many of whom I had not seen for many years. I felt that Suzuki Sensei had brought us all together again and was smiling upon us from up in heaven! I remembered that so many of us are diligently continuing his work here on earth.

Then, as I observed Dr. Kataoka's lessons of some very young children and could sense her undying faith in their potential and ability, I realized:

**WE MUST ALL WORK VERY HARD TO BE SURE THAT THE NEXT GENERATION OF  
SUZUKI METHOD STUDENTS, WHO WILL NOT HAVE A MEMORY OF SUZUKI SENSEI,  
WILL KNOW HIM AND HIS IDEALS BY OUR TEACHING.**

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**From Mrs. Suzuki**

**Matsumoto, Japan  
February 24, 1998**

**Dear Ms. Hagberg, President, and  
all members of Piano Basics Foundation:**

**"To thank you for your kindness  
and sympathy  
at a time when it was deeply appreciated."**

**Waltraud Suzuki**

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## **1998 PIANO BASICS SUMMER WORKSHOP SCHEDULE**

**DR. HARUKO KATAOKA**

**INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED PIONEER AND CO-FOUNDER OF THE SUZUKI  
PIANO METHOD**

***AUTHOR - Thoughts on the Suzuki Piano School, My Thoughts On Piano Technique, Sensibility and Education,  
and How To Teach Beginners***

**RECORDING ARTIST - *Suzuki Piano School*, Books 1, 2, and 3**

**LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, JUNE 7-12**

**Grace Baugh-Bennett, Director**

School of Music, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292

**PHONE:** (502)8520537 **FAX:** (502)423-0615 **EMAIL:** 73644.1651@compuserve.com

**ATLANTA, GEORGIA, JUNE 23-27**

**Robin Blankenship and Leah Brammer, Directors**

2518 Country Lake Circle, Powder Springs, GA 30073

**PHONE:** (770) 943-1218 **FAX:** (770) 992-2376 **EMAIL:** R8lan545@aol.com

**ROCHESTER, NEW YORK, AUGUST 9-13**

**Dr. Karen Hagberg, Director**

8 Prince Street, Rochester, NY 14607

**PHONE:** (716)2440490 **FAX:** (716)244-3542 **EMAIL:** Hagberg-Drake@juno.com

**SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA, AUGUST 16-20**

**Linda Nakagawa, Director**

242 River Acres Drive Sacramento, CA 95831

**PHONE/FAX:** (916) 422-2952 **EMAIL:** lgnak@quiknet.com

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**PBF MEMBERS TO RECEIVE TUITION REBATES FOR KATAOKA WORKSHOPS**

The Board of Directors of Piano Basics Foundation is pleased to announce that current members (i.e. those who paid their 1998 dues by April 1, 1998) will receive a \$25.00 tuition rebate for each Kataoka workshop they attend full-time this summer! We are very happy to be able to support our members ongoing training in Piano Basics with this program.

**To claim your rebate, please pay your full-time workshop tuition IN FULL and then fill out and return the enclosed form after you have attended the workshop.** A check for \$25.00 per workshop will be sent to you from Piano Basics Foundation. Deadline for submitting this form is September 1, 1998.

**WE HOPE THAT ALL OUR MEMBERS CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS PROGRAM BY  
ATTENDING A WORKSHOP.  
SEE YOU IN LOUISVILLE, ATLANTA, ROCHESTER AND SACRAMENTO!!**

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**ANNOUNCING THE  
1999 MATSUMOTO 10-PIANO CONCERT  
MAY 2, 1999  
ALL TEACHERS, NEW TO PIANO BASICS OR EXPERIENCED,  
ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THE MATSUMOTO 10-PIANO CONCERT REHEARSALS AND  
THE CONCERT.**

Teachers who have had at least three recent lessons with Dr. Kataoka (since 1996) are invited to enroll students in the 10-Piano Concert.

Students performing on the concert must be able to play their piece perfectly and musically; hands alone and hands together. Students must also have had a lesson with Dr. Kataoka at a recent summer workshop.

Students should plan to be in residence in Matsumoto at least two weeks before the concert for rehearsals.

In order to maximize this experience with their peers and to facilitate homestay opportunities, It is strongly recommended that students over the age of ten come without parents.

Teachers of participating students should plan to accompany their students and to be in residence full-time during the rehearsals and concert.

Homestay will be provided for participating students.

**Send students' names and proposed pieces to  
Karen Hagberg, 8 Prince Street, Rochester, N.Y. 14607.  
DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 30, 1998.**

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**MATSUMOTO 10-PIANO VIDEOS**

Videos of the November, 1997 Matsumoto 10-Piano Concert have just arrived! Piano Basics Foundation is offering these at the same price we pay, \$100.00 per video. Postage and handling will be paid by Piano Basics Foundation. To order please contact:

Linda Nakagawa, 242 River Acres Drive, Sacramento, CA 95831  
**Phone/FAX:** (916) 422-2952 **Email:** lgnak@quiknet.com

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**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

**PBF ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

June 28, 1998 12:15 PM

WEST COAST SUZUKI MUSIC INSTITUTE

Aliso Niguel High School, Aliso Viejo, CA

Send items for the agenda to

Karen Hagberg, 8 Prince Street Rochester, NY 14607 email: Hagberg-Drake@juno.com

**PBF NEWSLETTERS ON-LINE**

**PBF web site address:** <http://wwwl.ecu.edu/~hiwilbur/suzuki.htm>

You may read 1996 and 1997 newsletters online, text only.

## **DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER: JUNE 15**

We would like to hear from you.

Send articles, letters and comments to

**Piano Basics Foundation Newsletter**, P.O. Box 342, Yachats, OR 97498

## **PIANO BASICS TEACHER NEEDED!**

Bellingham, Washington: Piano Basics teacher needed early September for the combined studios of Ethel Fang (360-671-3672) and Cheryl Kraft (541-547-4821). Fifty-plus students.

Please call either teacher for information.

In the next newsletter, we will list areas where Piano Basics teachers now have waiting lists and are seeking new teachers. Please send your requests to us.

## **INVITATIONS FOR DR. KATAOKA'S WORKSHOP**

Anyone wishing to invite Dr. Kataoka for a 1999 workshop should write to her by August 15, 1998 and send a copy of the invitation to Cheryl Kraft, P.O. Box 342, Yachats, OR 97498.

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## **ANNOUNCING A MAJOR PIANO BASICS EVENT THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL PIANO BASICS 10-PIANO CONCERT SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA FRIDAY, AUGUST 6, 1999 FEATURING STUDENTS FROM JAPAN, THE U.S. AND OTHER COUNTRIES IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWED BY A PIANO BASICS WORKSHOP WITH**

**DR. HARUKO KATAOKA  
SUNDAY-THURSDAY, AUGUST, 8-12**

**ALL TEACHERS, NEW TO PIANO BASICS OR EXPERIENCED ARE INVITED TO ATTEND  
THE CONCERT REHEARSALS, THE CONCERT AND THE WORKSHOP. THIS EVENT  
PROVIDES A MAJOR OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE IN PIANO BASICS RESEARCH  
WITH DR. KATAOKA AND OTHER TEACHERS**

Teachers who have had at least three recent lessons with Dr. Kataoka (since 1996) are invited to enroll students in the 10-Piano Concert.

Students performing on the concert must be able to play their piece perfectly and musically; hands alone and hands together.

Students should plan to be in residence in Sacramento at least two weeks before the concert for rehearsals.

In order to maximize this experience with their peers and to facilitate homestay opportunities, it is strongly recommended that students over the age of ten come without parents.

Teachers of participating students should plan to accompany their students and to be full-time registrants at the workshop.

Homestay will be provided for participating students.

**Send students' names and proposed pieces to  
Linda Nakagawa, 242 River Acres Drive, Sacramento, Ca 95831.  
DEADLINE: DECEMBER 10, 1998**

**MAKE YOUR PLANS NOW TO JOIN US IN THIS SIGNIFICANT ENDEAVOR.**

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